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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 FREETOWN 000189

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Department Please pass to OES/STC FOR EILEEN KANE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KSCA](#) [TSPL](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [SL](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY/FREETOWN SCIENCE FELLOWS REQUEST

REF: (A) SECSTATE 28712 (B) FREETOWN 033

¶1. Embassy Freetown greatly appreciates the opportunity to submit two proposals in response to reftel A, each addressing priority and urgent needs. With a small USAID/Sierra Leone budget, Post is limited in its ability to assist the new Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) in several key areas of need, agriculture and health. Sierra Leone is one of the poorest nations in the world and is at the bottom of the UN Human Development Index. While in Washington Ambassador Perry requested opportunities for the USG to increase support to Sierra Leone through additional short to medium term technical assistance in agriculture and health (Ref. B). Post believes this is a perfect opportunity to meet this request and serve these needs.

¶2. All Embassy Agencies have participated in this process and fully endorse both proposals. Post also is firmly committed to providing the required logistical support, specifically housing. Due to the dire situation in Sierra Leone, Post requests serious consideration of both proposals and hopes for a favorable response to both of them as well. We stand ready to support and assist both Embassy Science Fellows.

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Proposal Number One: Ministry of Agriculture  
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¶3. This is an urgent priority request. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MFFS) requests three-months direct technical assistance from the Embassy Science Fellow program to his Ministry to help in the review, update and formulation of the new Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security 10-15-year "National Agriculture Research, Policy, Strategy and Program" document. The expert Fellow is expected to work with technical experts from the Ministry of Agriculture, and other relevant ministries, and the FAO during the strategy review, update and formulation process.

¶4. The Minister requests the expert(s) to be knowledgeable in policy and strategy formulation and planning, with a sound technical background in the following areas, in this tentative priority:

- Agricultural Economics
- Research and Extension
- Private Sector Promotion
- Institutional Capacity Building for counterparts in the MAFFS
- Irrigation

¶5. The Minister outlined the new vision for the agriculture sector and is in dire need of modern thinkers with current technological expertise to work as part of a core team. Some specific areas of focus include: the role of macroeconomics in increasing wealth, GDP and income, focusing more on farmer associations which can increase production and reduce costs.

Research, extension, private sector promotion and irrigation are top priorities in the new agriculture sector development vision.

¶16. Related to this vision is the Minister's acknowledgment of the extreme paucity of appropriate skills, knowledge and talent in his Ministry. He is therefore requesting support to strengthen the Ministry's capacities. The Fellow could form part of a select design team to draft an action plan for the institutional capacity building of the Ministry of Agriculture.

¶17. COMMENT: One of Post's major priorities is fostering economic growth through the rejuvenation of the agriculture sector of Sierra Leone, once a country of agricultural abundance. This priority will be met primarily through USAID/Sierra Leone's program, about half of which supports agriculture and agribusiness development. Post provides some technical assistance and training, but mostly at the local level (i.e., working with farmers, farm associations and communities). USAID has insufficient funds to provide the essential, urgent, intensive "one-on-one" technical assistance support that the Ministry requested. Post views this request as urgent and a top priority in order to assist the Ministry to address the rapidly escalating food crisis. As a country with a major rice-producing history, Sierra Leone stands well-placed to regain its agricultural surplus status. The Minister, himself a PhD agricultural economist, has promised full commitment to ensuring the best significant use of an Embassy Science Fellow in his Ministry. He noted that a U.S. contribution of expertise will be a substantive contribution to the development of the Sierra Leone's new "National Agriculture Research, Policy, Strategy and Program." END COMMENT.

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Proposal #2: MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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¶18. Currently, Sierra Leone has the highest under-five infant mortality rate in the world. Primary contributing factors to this are malnutrition, infectious diseases, and lack of access to trained health care providers.

¶19. To address this problem, Njala University has established a number of institutions, including the Institutes of Home Sciences, Environmental Management and Quality Control, in addition to Departments of Nursing and Environmental Health. The university drafted a road map to define how these different university institutions can address the contributing factors identified above.

¶110. A skilled expert could provide an executive review of the roadmap and establish a set of implementation recommendations to maximize effectiveness within this resource-poor environment.

¶11. Within a three-month period, a skilled expert could:

--Assess the ability of the individual departments to perform their respective tasks;

--Recommend corrections and deficiencies in their respective curricula, faculties and facilities; and

--Recommend external sponsors and provide assistance in writing proposals to those organizations.

¶12. Again, Post appreciates the opportunity to submit these two top priority proposals. We look forward to a positive response.

PERRY